

# B2B (back to basics) in Outdoor Learning Workshops

By Meira Kober

## Background:

The method used in our workshop is the experiential learning approach – where you do and understand rather than learn about ...

*We identify with Maya Angelou's saying:  
"People will forget what you said to them,  
They will forget what you did for them,  
But they will always remember how you  
made them feel"*

B2B (Back to basics) is an approach that emphasizes the experience in which participants are involved, rather than the "pyrotechnics" that have become a part of many outdoor training sessions. I believe that the lesser artificial props are used; the more space is given to the actual process of the personal learning adventure. What triggered the creation of B2B was that some of the "outdoor activities" were

used by entertainment companies in fun days – so our clients had the feeling of "more of the same". The platform of outdoor activities such as spider web, key-punch and even some high rope elements etc.. were over exposed.

Also, clients wanted something more than "just games" as they called it – they wanted something more immersive.

In the last five years I have led numerous "voyages in nature" that embrace the group with a relaxed, safe and ventilating atmosphere that invites them to be involved and step out of their comfort zone in order to learn and progress.

We work with the business world only, we do not carry out therapeutic sessions on personal levels nor do we deal with youth or special needs population. Since this is not a voluntary attendance, and often participants are peers – we take extra care

to maintain an emotional safe atmosphere, and amongst our ground rules are: honor your partners, pay attention to what is said as well as what is unsaid, be present in body mind and spirit, speak your truth (what you really think and not what you think others want to say. etc.)

## The B2B basics:

The first step is to find the right natural surrounding – a few criteria define what is needed:

- It has to be away from the city (cannot be a park in an urban surrounding)
- The trail should be as solitude as possible
- The zone chosen will have an added value in terms of climate, season of the year, landscape etc.

**Season of the year** – If there is a special blooming season of almond trees – then I would choose a trail that passes through such orchards. Same goes for fauna and flora as well as water bodies that are quiet and serene (small ponds, water creeks...) the idea behind this is that the embracing surrounding will not distract the attention from the process in the workshop. It is desirable to find some kind of a natural obstacle that they would have to give a hand to each other, but nothing extreme. I find that such voyages have an additional impact if they are performed in "out of the usual" time, e.g. on a full moon night – Or on a special date such as January first, or the longest day of the year or any other outstanding date.

**A special location** – In Israel we have more desert than forests that's why we go there for quiet and peaceful zones. One of my lecturers at university once told us that the desert is where one can feel closest to god, because there is nothing there but the spirit... if you look at the bible you can see that all religions had revelations in the desert. So maybe that is one special thing that you can find in Israel only – the Judean desert. When the workshop has to do with leadership I enrich the experience by integrating the historical/biblical point of view as to vision, followers and leaders. Sometimes we also have a philosophical conversation as to what is our legacy as a company? As individuals? What is our



*The Judean Desert – a special place*

donation to humanity? But it really depends on the team and the topic/issue of the workshop- of course it is a good topic for leadership empowerment.

**Plan the time/flow** – Take into consideration the time needed for the walk, breaks, activities and processing. If you can walk the path alone in 90 minutes, then for the B2B voyage I would plan for at least 6 hours.

**Prepare participants** – It is very important that participants are prepared for this: good walking shoes, comfortable clothes, backpack, sandwiches and drinks for the whole day, a small notebook with pen, a camera – they should be instructed to leave their cellular phones at home.

The activities I choose to weave into the “walk” are of a nature that integrate with the surrounding. Participants are immersed in the nature around, in the activities and in the process of learning. This perception of B2B nature voyages enhances an intimate meeting between participants giving them a chance to simply talk – express their feelings towards the given topic, discuss matters that are important to them at work and or career. I would like to point out that these B2B nature voyages are not on a therapeutic level – I do not do group dynamics in initiated “walks in pairs”.

### An example of an activity: “solo”

Choose an area or “arena” that has defined and clear borderlines - define to the participants the distance they can walk to and also define for them the time frame (not more than 15 minutes).

Ask each one to walk alone, quietly until he finds a place that he would like to sit down. Then he should sit and think about the given subject.

For example: what are the two values that I find most important in our department (or organization) and what would I ask of my fellows so that these values can be practiced? Also ask each one to bring back a small pebble, or stone or something that he can write on.

When time is over, usually I call them using a soft whistle or any other natural way ... slowly they walk back – ask them not to talk until we all meet and sit in a circle.

Once they are all in a circle – give them each an artline pen to write on their personal pebble a “mantra” that will help them to manifest their value. E.g. mutual honor or acceptance or no judgment etc... Then have a sharing session in a circle .Ask them to keep the pebble and bring them for the next meeting. On the following meeting you can do some work with the items/values that they have come up with. Then you can glue the pebble onto a board and have it as a visual in their dining room or hall.

### The triangle

Another activity is in pairs or threesomes: They walk away a few meters – then each one draws a triangle on the ground, using whatever nature offers in the immediate surroundings. This is the life balance triangle work – family – hobby/wellbeing. The next step is to collect 10 pebbles or leaves or fruit and then place them in the three vertexes according to the amount of time they are devoting to each. They will describe to each other what the pebbles represent and then they will try to move pebbles from one vertex to another according to what they would like the heaps in the vertexes to look like, and what they can do to make it happen or what they need so that it can happen. They should not move too many pebbles around – it has to be done with care. And then again they speak it out to each other. This activity is an improvisation of the “have – do – be” model.

Important: before they begin, tell them that they will not have to share this experience with the entire group. Whatever is being said is theirs only !!!! I give about 45 mins to one hour for this activity. I walk around to see that they are engaged and many times I would find that they would like to keep on with this activity so I am flexible with the time frame. There is also the question of how do I choose the threesomes? I find that the best way is spontaneous – the three that are standing next to each other ...

### The stone arch

A team activity when doing the B2B on leadership: Find a place with rocks/stones or pebbles, divide the group into teams of 4-5 members in each team, and give them the following instruction: ...” I would like to ask you to build a good arch, using stones or pebbles or rocks that are within a radius of 30 meters. You have up to 15 minutes to do it ...”

The observations are many:

- Teamwork – how do they get organized, who decides what ?
- Team members- who takes which role in the team
- Are they synchronized with sizes and shapes of stones?
- Who is the leader? And what is the leadership style?

And most important: who defines what is a “good” arch? Do they ask the trainer? Do they talk about it to define it to themself-



Team activity without material – follow the steps of others



The stone arch



The ending

ves? Is a good arch high? Stable? Big? Wide? Aesthetic? Vertical or lying on the ground? There are many learning that come out of this ; in a leadership workshop I often raise the point: if you don't know what is the purpose and you are not clear on the success criteria then how do you know that you have achieved the goal?

It is interesting to see how different teams interpret the same instruction, that means that when you are asking your workers or followers to do something you have to be very clear and specific otherwise expect different results ... that is one of the principles of leadership!

### Team activity – no props

They have to walk in the footsteps of each other without breaking the chain. . This is a good activity for global teams. It will be

part of a voyage in which we experience communication and tighten the bonds between people who live on different parts of the globe.

Here the learning has to do with listening to the needs of each other, mutual responsibility and commitment to a common goal etc.

e.g. one of the team members in the picture was from Australia and others were from IMEA – when trying to find

the right pace to move, he suggested that they count: one crocodile, two crocodiles etc ... it turned out to be a great way to synchronize the team and everyone was curious as to how they use this counting method in Australia. Barriers were slowly lifted ...

The processing can be about what does it take for us to work as a good team? The language we use, the understandings we have of cultural diversity, the support needed and the dependency .

### General tips

The walk between the activities should be at least 30 minutes.

Sometimes I ask them to walk in silence to absorb what came up in the activity

It is nice to have a picnic together – when everyone takes their food out of the backpacks and share the meal. Cooking tea or coffee would be nice too.

I usually bring with me chocolates that I give them sometime toward the end of the voyage.

### The ending

The ending of this B2B has many variations, one of them that I love is: Beforehand I ask each one to prepare a small present for someone (anonymous) it should be small to be carried in the backpack and it has a purpose to make the person happy (can be a sweet, a letter, a poem or anything) I do not give them any direction.

So the ending of such a voyage would be that we all stand in a circle and each one gives the present to the person across the circle from him and gives him/her a compliment or positive feedback from what he has seen and learnt about the person today.

### Autorin

Ishtar is an outdoor learning company, active in leading organizations in Israel, since 1995.

Meira Kober is the founder; she is a master of outdoor learning workshops in which she skillfully integrates her qualifications in group psychology and group dynamics with outdoor activities. She is a qualified consultant of Adventure Experience in Business and an expert in leadership also accredited by Prof J.Adair – Action centered leadership. Kontakt: [ishtar@ishtar.co.il](mailto:ishtar@ishtar.co.il)

